

Exodus 32:1-14 - Thursday, May 21st, 2009

- This chapter is sort of a famous one in the sense that it is about the “golden calf” that the Israelites make and worship as god.
- My hope, in studying this chapter, is that we don’t get wrapped up in this Bible story, and thus, miss the application this has to us.

32:1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

- Moses has been on Mt. Sinai, 40 days, (the number of judgment), which is just a little over a month, and the Israelites are complaining.
- It's interesting that one of the reasons for making a “replacement god,” was because this man Moses had delayed his coming.
- I think of Jesus’ parable to the disciples when he compares the wise servant to the evil servant when the master delays His coming.

Matthew 24:45-51 45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. NKJV

- I believe this points to a pre-tribulation rapture in how it depicts the one who is always ready, because he doesn't know the day or hour.
- One of the reasons why Israel then, and people now, live ungodly lives, is because they think “my master is delaying his coming.”
- If, however, I believe my master could come at anytime, then I'm living my life righteously in anticipation of His soon return.

- There's something else I think we would be grossly remiss to not see. Notice it was the people that asked Aaron to make a new god.
- Aaron isn't the one who comes up with this idea, it was the people. For Aaron to acquiesce and do this; was to be a man-pleaser.

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. NKJV

- As a pastor, being a “man-pleaser” is constantly before me. Allow me to explain. We, especially as pastors, like to be, well, “liked.”
- We want to be a “popular pastor with the people.” We want people to come to our churches, and come back to our churches.
- The measure of a pastor's success is the size of his congregation. If a pastor preaches “man-pleasing” sermons, he will be popular.

“The pastor when facing his congregation on Sunday morning, dare not think of the effect his sermon may have on his job, his salary or his future relation to the church. Let him but worry about tomorrow and he becomes a hireling and no true shepherd of the sheep. No man is a good preacher who is not willing to lay his future on the line every time he expounds the Word. He must let his job and his reputation ride on each and every sermon or he has no right to think that he stands in the prophetic tradition.”

A.W. Tozer “The Size of the Soul” pp. 146-147

- I realize we're still in verse one, but there's another interesting truth here that I would like for us to look at before we go on to verse two.
- The Israelites just throw in the towel, so to speak. They quickly give up on “this man Moses,” and are already seeking after other gods.

“They were so fickle that they could not be trusted alone; and worse than this, they were basely ungrateful to forget their God, and ascribe their deliverance to Moses; and even to him they were foully thankless, for they called him ‘this Moses,’ as if in contempt, and that to the face of his own brother. They must have been in a state of wild rebellion, thus to insult both their great leader and his brother. The fact was that they were so utterly unspiritual that without something to see they could not abide in peace: the faith which seeth Him Who is invisible they had not learned.”

Charles Spurgeon

- Sometimes I think we're prone to look down on the Israelites in our piety and self-righteousness, as if to say; “we would never do that.”
- The fact of the matter is; we do. When God seemingly delays revealing Himself to us, how quick are we to make other arrangements?”

2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

- It doesn't seem that Aaron had any problem talking the Israelites into giving him their gold for this calf. They're all too willing to do it.
- I think it's the same for us as well; we're all too ready to give our money for fleshly and carnal things at the expense of the godly things.

- Also, I find it interesting that Aaron is the one who is molding it with an “engraving tool,” and not the artists like Bezaleel and Aholiab.
- Clearly, this is a work of “man's flesh” and not “God's Spirit,” and it's almost as if Aaron is glorying in it when he presents it to them.
- It would seem that all the children of Israel are functioning in the flesh and it's evidenced by the absence of anyone saying anything.

- One other observation I would like to make before we move on. They got this idea of worshipping a golden calf from the Egyptians.
- Egypt in the scriptures is a picture of the world and for them to do this can be likened to when we go back to worldly “Egyptian” ways.

"Shame on Aaron to pander to them! What idolatry to think that the infinite Jehovah can be likened unto a bullock which hath horns and hoofs. They went back to old Egyptian idolatry, and set up an ox as the symbol of the God of power."

Charles Spurgeon

- It's been said that after God gets them out of Egypt, He has to get the Egypt out of them. So too is this true for me and you in the world.
- We are still "in" the world, but not "of" the world, but when we acquiesce to the ways of the world, we become worldly and thus, ungodly.

5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD."

- This is where it gets really interesting; Aaron now builds an altar for this golden calf. This means that they will now offer sacrifices to it.
- In addition to this, they seem to still be worshipping the Lord but in the form of other gods, which the second commandment forbids.

"...they did not leave off worshipping Jehovah, but transgressed the second commandment by likening Him to an ox."

Charles Spurgeon

- We see the Israelites doing this throughout the Old Testament. They put other gods before Jehova God as the objects of their devotion.
- I believe this has profound application to us even now. We don't leave off worshipping the Lord; we just worship other gods too.

6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

- This one verse has two things that we should see in it. First of all, did you notice how they get up early, and sacrifice to this god.
- One said it this way; we will have no problem sacrificing to our god. We'll even sacrifice sleeping in on our day off just for our god.

- The second thing that we need to see is where it says that they "sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." "Rose up to play?"
- In the original language of the Old Testament Hebrew, this suggests; "sex-play." In other words, this was likely a drunken orgy.

- Why is it important that we know and understand this? On thought is that it's because it's been "40" days since they heard God speak.
- The implication would be that it doesn't take long to backslide. We need to stay in the Word every day to hear God speak every day.
- The more I get into the Word of God, the more the Word of God gets into me, and faith comes by hearing and that by the Word of God.

7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'

- At the risk of seeing the humorous in something so serious, I can't help but notice how God sort of disowns the children of Israel here.
- He tells Moses to get down there because; "your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.
- Now, there is an application to us in this; "our sin will distance us from Him, and Him from us." Draw near to Him, He draws near to you.

"9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

- Think about this, God is actually telling Moses to get out of the way so that He can zap them and start all over with Moses instead.
- If God were to say this to me, I would have said; "ok!" This is probably why God would never say this to me. He could say it to Moses.
- I'm of the belief that God knew what Moses' response would be before He said this to him, which may be why he said this to him.

11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

- For Moses to intercede on behalf of the children of Israel while in the midst of their unspeakable sin and wickedness is utterly amazing.
- By the way, did you notice that Moses gives them right back to God when he says; "Your people whom You have brought out of Egypt."
- What's interesting is that it's not just that Moses intercedes, it's why he intercedes, and how he intercedes that we need to take note of.

- First, the why; Moses intercedes and even pleads with God to not destroy them because he knows and understands the heart of God.
- In other words, when we don't know, we can go back to what we do know, and we do know that it's not God's will that anyone perish.
- Here, Moses is praying according to the will of God, because it is the nature of God to be merciful, compassionate, loving and kind.

Exodus 34:5-6 5 Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, NKJV

- That's "why" Moses intercedes, and now for the "how" Moses intercedes. At the risk of preaching a short three point sermon, here it is:
1. Relationship - You have a "relationship" with them. They are Your people, whom You brought out of Egypt. Don't end this relationship!
 2. Reputation - You have a good "reputation" with them, and others. If you kill them and start over, what will the world say about You?
 3. Remembrance - You have a "covenant" with them, remember? You promised that you would multiply their descendants in the land.